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SHAKESPEARE, AS A MODERNIST HYPOTEXT

Looking backwards, Lacan's revisions of Freud[1] launched since 1949 appear more like a psychoanalytic version of modernist philosophy than as the founding stone of the typically postmodernist construction of the subject, whose prevailing models are cognitivist and linguistic. No one is in control of language, says Lacan, as it is prior to one's entry into the semiological order. The subject is constituted according to the laws of culture, and meaning is generated, not within the individual consciousness but elsewhere, in the other: society's regimes of knowledge and signification. It was well in advance of Foucault's *episteme* and *archive*, or Kuhn's *paradigm*, that historical systems of meaning had already received consideration under such names as "interpsychology" (Gabriel Tarde), "collective archetypes", "shadows" (Jung), cultural soul and spatial symbolization (Oswald Spengler), chronotope (Bakhtin), stylistic matrix (Lucian Blaga), representations (Heidegger), fictions (Vaihinger), world picture (Tillyard), nets (Wittgenstein)...

Modernists, from Laforgue to Joyce, would look upon history as a nightmare and seek ways out of its prisons and labyrinths. The exit, however, took them through the spatial-temporal extent of reified forms of consciousness: the order of artefacts. The romantics' and the positivists' sense of an organic life sweeping through communities along centuries yielded, in late modernity, to the historicist pageant of "styles".The "age of representations", as Heidegger called it, relativised the sense of history as well as of subjectivity. A collective system of meaning generation, a common code of representation can be identified behind the generation of any work of art. Interpretations too are variables adding up to a re-invention rather than a perpetuation of a writer's works over time. This new trend of thought has reached the point where John Drakakis feels entitled to speak of "alternative Shakespeares": *the protean values which subsequent generations of critics have discovered in the texts themselves can be demonstrated to be in large part the projections of their own externally applied values*[2].

[1] Jean Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*. Translated by Alan Sheridan, New York, Norton, 1977; *Seminar on The Purloined Letter*. Translated by Jeffrey Mehlman, in "Yale French Studies", XLVIII, 1972, p. 38-72; *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*. Translated by Alan Sheridan, New York, W. W. Norton and Co., 1978.

[2] John Drakakis (ed.), *Alternative Shakespeares,* London and New York, Routledge, 1986 [1985], p. 25.

DACOROMANIA, serie nouă, XI–XII, 2006–2007, Cluj-Napoca, p. 289-299

Taking issue with the dispute between Stratfordians and anti-Stratfordians over Shakespeare's real identity[3] in an article, Vasile Voiculescu, a writer and physician of the earlier half of the twentieth century, dissuaded his readers from following their example. Suppose one managed to point out the real, historical man, how could one explain out Shakespeare's work by his biography? Each individual life is an absolute, unfathomable enigma. Quite significantly for the spirit of his age, Voiculescu did not advice his "gentle readers" to read only Shakespeare's works either. In order to understand Shakespeare, they needed to read... what had been written about Shakespeare along the centuries that had lapsed since his death. To see Shakespeare "acted over, / In states unborn and accents yet unknown", as Cassius predicts in Act III, Scene 1 of *Julius Caesar*. To watch the swelling textual ball of that name rolling from the sixteenth down to the twentieth century. In Lacanian language, Shakespeare's texts are just floating signifiers, whose meaning vary with time and interpreters, according to the signifying battery of cultural law: the language that speaks its subjects rather than the other way round.

Vasile Voiculescu was no exception to the rule. His inter-textual exercises in *Sentimental Gymnastics*, a play of the forties, and in *The Last Imaginary Sonnets of William Shakespeare*, a sonnet sequence written in the late fifties, can be described as signifieds sliding under the Shakespeare Signifier. Neither could be properly understood, if at all, outside the contexts in which they were born. In Genette's terms (see *Palimpsestes. La littérature au second degré,* 1982), the former is an instance of *modernist hypo-tex*t (an anterior text), while the textual economy of the latter comes closer to a *postmodernist inter-text* (the co-presence of two texts).

CONTEXTS

1. Ideological

The Romanians of the early twentieth century would probably have been pragmatists, futurists and constructivists even in the absence of such trends of thought sweeping over the world at that time. The end of the war, which had seen the rise of nation states on the ruins of the former dynastic alliances, had also brought "Great Romania" into being: a modern state whose frontiers almost overlapped those of the ancient Dacian state. But they were not looking back; they were reconsidering the notion of national identity. In a paradoxical way, the nationalist discourses, which had surged up in support of the war of independence against the Turkish rule before the turn of the century, died away making room for calls to renew the links with Europe. "Ideea Europeană" (The European Idea), a journal which ran into print from 1919 to 1921, backed up the synchronising tendencies of the literary magazine "Sburătorul" (The Demon Lover) through the

[3] V. Voiculescu, *The Shakespeare Controversy*, in idem, *Gânduri albe*, Victor Crăciun and Radu Voiculescu eds., Bucharest, Cartea Românească, 1986.

comprehensive coverage of political, economic and philosophical ideas disseminated all over the Continent. Although the literary contributors were committed to the supremacy and autonomy of the aesthetic value, literature was not isolated from the cultural manifold.

The programmatic statement of the first issue – June 22, 1919 –, signed by the most authoritative spirit of the new review, philosopher C. Rădulescu-Motru, is playing down the importance of political events, such as the Versailles peace or the prospective foundation of the League of Nations as the guarantor of peace. The long-cherished values of reason and politics had been devalued as a consequence of the war. They had proved instrumental in bringing about an international tragedy. Culture and sensibility take their place. The columnist is making his point in a way similar to E. M. Forster's, who about the same time was suggesting a new form of international bonding among the intellectual elite, as an alternative to the dying empires. If The League of Nations was being hatched as an antidote to militarism, civilization as the totality of culture had already proved its efficiency:

> "Civilizația e de mult pașnică prin consimțământul tacit al creatorilor de adevăruri şi forme noi în ştiință, în artă şi literatură. Văzuți de departe, toți aceşti creatori apar surprinzător de asemănați, ca membrii unei aceleaşi familii sufleteşti. Pe toți îi preocupă aceleaşi probleme, toți utilizează aceleaşi metode. Diferențele dintre ei sunt nuanțe de coloratură care se pierd cu cât le priveşti mai în adânc. Ideea europeană va avea grijă să țină vie în conştiința publicului nostru această comunitate sufletească de la baza civilizației europene"[4].

How do we understand our relationship with the civilization of Europe? Certainly not like the Pan-Slavists, he goes on, who had denounced their ties with the "corrupt" West, which might have thwarted the "germs" of their national spirit, and where were they now? Nor like those who traced dividing lines between the neo-Latin, Anglo-American or Anglo-Germanic cultures, in the Manechian speech of patriotism versus treason. The path trodden by civilization is only one.

The headings however are often the typical binaries of structuralist thought: The State and the Syndicates, Militarism and Balkanism, Regionalism and Democracy, Nationalism and Humanism, the last topic giving rise to an impassioned controversy. Whereas Marin Ştefănescu ("Ideea europeană", nr. 5, July 20, 1919) thinks that each people "strikes a specific key in the music of humanity", the front page columnist of the nr. 9 (August 17) issue retorts that

> "Umanitatea nu se interesează de notele specifice ce le poate aduce un neam culturii. Ea se făleşte cu un Shakespeare sau Goethe, care slăvesc eternul omenesc în operele

[4] "Civilization has long been peaceful thanks to the tacit consensus of the pathfinders to truth and new forms in science, art and literature. From a distance, they look amazingly alike, as if they were members of one and the same family. They apply themselves to studying the same problems, following the same methods. Even the differences in emphasis vanish away when examined in closer focus. "Ideea europeană" will see to it that this spiritual community at the basis of the European civilization is being kept alive in the consciousness of our readers" ("Ideea europeană", nr. 1, June 22, 1919, p. 1).

> lor şi nu cu poetaştrii care iau in cântecele lor drept leitmotiv naţionalismul. Opera mare e lipsită de nota particularistă”[5].

The latter point of view enjoys further support from Dr. Zaharia-Brăila, who outlines the “Means to body forth humanitarism”. They are “psychological directions” and the subjects are the “spiritual leaders of the peoples”. He draws up a list of authors to be taught in schools, a canon of cultural influences (Goethe, Spinoza, Descartes, Shakespeare, Ibsen) coming “from all extant peoples”.

> “Dar dacă oamenii diverselor neamuri se pot influenţa reciproc, dacă opera unuia poate fi percepută, asimilată şi continuată de celălalt, aceasta nu înseamnă decât că înrudirea sufletească a lor şi deci şi a popoarelor pe care le reprezintă este un fapt real. La o parte deci cu pretextul deosebirii fundamentale dintre popoare. Câmpul de dezvoltare al şcolii umaniste este întins peste tot globul pământesc”[6].

A survey of “The New Intellectual Coteries in France” (I/27/ December 21, 1919) is an opportunity for Cora Irineu to side with the *Clarté* against The Party of the Intelligentsia, as the latter was pressing home the idea of French grandeur and cultural monopole. Truth, the columnist says, has neither frontiers nor dimensions. We do not choose democracy versus autocracy, but true culture against false. The cult of art and of culture, in general, throws up universal remedies. The woman problem is sorted out according to the same logic. If the militarist state, founded on the male drives towards power and aggression, should be replaced by a peaceful, culture-supportive social body, feminism would fall out of the political movements of the day. Could Rădulescu-Motru have read Virginia Woolf’s similar allegations in “The Three Guineas” before writing his article?

Once granted the right to political self-determination, Romania soon caught the contagion of what Spengler calls the “Faustian spirit” of the West. The great influencer of the time was Wilhelm Wundt’s cultural psychology with its historicist picture of myths and works of art turned to emblems of the social forces shaping successive phases of civilization… The modernist meta-narratives – Kantian criticism, Hegelian idealism or Spencerian evolutionism – were denounced, and schools of embodied forms of sensibility and pragmatism were warmly embraced. William James, André Gide, Romain Roland, Georges Duhamel, Nicolae Iorga, Walther Rathenau, Friedrich Nietzsche and others were called upon to testify to the virtues of the pragmatist and voluntarist psychology, as well as the ethical value of

[5] “Humanity does not care about the specific notes contributed by individual ethnic groups to culture. It takes pride in a Shakespeare or Goethe, who glorify in their works what is eternal in universal man, not with hack poets who harp on nationalism. A masterpiece carries no particularising features” (“Ideea europeană”, nr. 9, August 17, 1919, p. 1-2).

[6] “[…] if people belonging to different races can influence one another, if a writer’s work can be understood, internalised and continued by someone else, what else could this prove if not the reality of the spiritual affinity bonding them together and with the rest of humanity? Away with such pretexts as the essential differences separating nations from one another. The evolving field of humanistic studies will spread all over the earth” (*ibidem*).

action. The field of action, according to Rathenau, is infinitely closer to artistic creation than science. Man is primarily an acting being, reads a quote from W. James. Ideas are no good unless backed up by courage and will. This is the philosophy informing the mainstream aesthetics of the day. A whole issue of *Ideea Europeană* is dedicated to Lucienne Caravillot, a dancer who had long pondered on the meanings of her art: *no idea is any good unless acted out, hypostasized* [7]. The Cartesian duality of thought and matter yields to the embodied paradigm of the actual body performing the art of rhythmic movement and gestures.

Summing up, knowledge of the world's cultural assets was the gate entry to the society of the intelligentsia. Of more worth was the artistic creation grounded in embodied forms of communal rather than individual subjectivity – other works of art or self-reflexive –, performing a sort of emotional gymnastics, as, according to introspectionists, it is emotions that occupy the centre stage of our psychological make up, and acting is becoming.

2. Cultural

V. Voiculescu felt dwarfed by Shakespeare's encyclopaedic knowledge. In *The Shakespeare Controversy*[8], he remarks that Shakespeare had possessed "the totality of human knowledge at that time" and that "any specialist must defer to him". He had been in turn a humanist, a diplomat, a depth psychologist[9], a Christian soldier, a magistrate, a great physician, a crafty musician, a botanist, a naturalist, a keeper of hawks, a speaker of many languages, a visitor to many places, initiated into the secrets and back stages of diplomacy and of government, a master of rhetoric, of eloquence... Yet it was as a student of experimental psychology and nervous physiology that Voiculescu interpreted Shakespeare's characters and used them as props in his own play of the forties. He confessed, in an interview[10], that he had been a disciple of Sergio, Wundt and Höfding in philosophy and of Vaschide, Pierre Janet and William James in medicine, but had later evolved towards a sort of neo-Platonism. Redeployed on the aesthetic level, this statement could be translated as follows: his characters adopt masks (mostly Shakespearian) – as embodied forms of subjectivity or psychological universals while acting out a sort of experimental introspectionism. The models put forward by the hypotexts represent emotional invariants which are drawn out of their immutable heaven and adapted to dramatic plots spinning out fictions as hypostases of the soul and as modes of action reconstructing those realities. As

[7] "Ideea europeană", nr. 49, September 12-19, 1920, p. 7.

[8] V. Voiculescu, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

[9] Shakespeare's expertise in the field would later be the topic of another Romanian psychiatrist's case book on psychic disturbances: Alexandru Olariu, *Shakespeare şi psihologia dramatică,* Timişoara, Facla, 1976, where characters are treated in earnest as case studies in clinical disturbances.

[10] V. Voiculescu, *op. cit.,* p. L-LI.

Alice Voinescu, one of the drama critics of the time, says, having Ibsen in mind, ”the theatre will stage exercises for the soul which practical life, with its overwhelming material needs, only seldom allows”[11].

Spengler’s polarity between the Faustian West and leisurely East was reversed in modernist Romania, where Bergson was less Marcel Proust’s philosopher of intuition than a Jamesian variety of pragmatic introspectionism, where an activist touch was added even to Kant to make him sound more like Walther Rathenau’s *Practical idealism*, and where Byron, the “bête noire” of the Victorians for his defeatism and spiritual malaise, was forced to change colours like a chameleon adapting itself to the new historical “environment”: St. Zeletin’s model roles of “philosophers and philosophies”[12] mentions him alongside Hegel’s master spirit of history, not as the creator of Childe Harold but of the figure of Napoleon as the incarnation of its spirit and as the emblem of determination in the eponymous poem. In fact, the entire 25 July (1920) issue is adding up proofs in an argument leading “towards a new practical idealism”. William James is quoted on the subject of the “cash value” of ideas: man is an action being and an ideal is no good unless it takes effect through courage and will. And, according to Rathenau, “the field of action is infinitely closer to artistic creation than to sciences” (*ibidem*). Philosopher Constantin Antoniade remarks the “new biological turn taken by epistemology”, building up, on Bergson, a human mould made up of sensations, emotions and will. He defended “pragmatism against rationalism” (the title of a 1913 essay), appealing to the French philosopher’s authority in singling out the action-oriented consciousness as man’s fundamental law: “our perceptions are determined by our possible actions on objects or by our interests concerning them to a larger extent than by the objects themselves”[13]. As C. Rădulescu-Motru comments in the 5 September issue of “Ideea Europeană”*,* Wundt’s physiological psychology had provided “the characteristic pattern of an entire slice of Europe’s history of mentalities”[14]. This is perfectly true at least with respect to Romania. The recent work, not only of Wundt and James but also of Alfred Binet (whom Tache Ionescu, the Minister of Public Instruction invited to lecture at Bucharest University), of Jules Soury and Nicolas Vaschide, was currently brought to public attention. Common to all were the distrust of logic and rationalism, the refutation of the Cartesian body/mind duality, a belief in the correspondence between emotions and bodily manifestations, an extension of pragmatism to functionalism (predisposition to react to stimuli from the environment or to control emotions through volitional acts), to social psychology (engineered through education or art) and cultural psychology. Wundt’s idea that the subject is determined by its

[11] Alice Voinescu, *Întâlnire cu eroi din literatură şi teatru,* Bucureşti, Editura Eminescu, 1983, p. 60.

[12] “Ideea europeană”, III, nr. 72, July 31, 1920, p. 1-2.

[13] Constantin Antoniade, *Opere,* Bucureşti, Editura Eminescu, 1985, p. 238-239.

[14] C. Rădulescu-Motru, *Wilhelm Wundt,* in “Ideea europeană”, nr. 48, August 20 – September 5.

predicates led him to a survey of “Vőlkerpsychologie”, that is a history of the peoples of the world through the artefacts produced along successive stages of cultural development. Nicolas Vaschide, who had been fascinated by Binet’s lectures in Bucharest and followed him to Paris setting up his own experimental laboratory at the École des Hautes Études, even recommended that logic should be supplanted by psychology, as the mind was not commonly engaged in logical operations but rather determined by subconscious drives. The psychologist mentioned by Marcel Proust in his correspondence with Countess de Noailles, his literary hostess and a writer of Romanian nationality, had a powerful influence on Voiculescu, both as physician and playwright, maybe also because they had been born in the same Romanian county.

In 1902 Vaschide and Cl. Vurpas published an article on “mental analysis” and on the “delirium of introspection”[15] which anticipated Freud’s theory of “the uncanny” by almost two decades. The two psychologists maintain that an induced ideation may inhibit the effect of the external world blocking the logical polarization of images and sensory impressions. An intense mental image destroys the power of attention, the moral synthesis being directed instantly toward the image and adapting itself intimately to it. The imposed image occupies the consciousness and brings about a state of distraction, and, as it grows in intensity, the subject ends by believing in the reality of the image. He is reduced to a plaything of emotion, every mental image that presents itself to his mind becoming a pivot or theme about which he builds and constructs more or less intense and durable delirious conceptions. Whereas Wundt’s theory of the psychophysical parallelism (every physical event has a psychological counterpart) could well explain the formation of habits, Vaschide’s and Vurpas’s theory of the intellect or soul acting independently of the physical evolution of the body and producing a psychological construction without any value (having no correspondence in the world of “real” objects and actions) accounted for the “delirium of introspection” evolved by “thinkers, litterateurs and artists” – alongside clinical psychopaths!... – “under the apparent aspect of a real life”. The polarization of mental states was thrust into a given direction through attention as function of will-power.

3. Aesthetic

It was a good knowledge of Bergson and other varieties of introspectionism and pragmatism that Alice Voinescu brought to her criticism of dramatic performances. The living man, she writes in her criticism of a “Bergsonised” Ibsen, is not an already constituted entity but one that is constantly becoming, and it is drama that creates man by putting him into action. The dramatic plot is the aesthetic equivalent of action, the means whereby heroes are created through their

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[15] N. Vaschide, Cl. Vurpas, *The Mental Analysis,* in “Journal of Mental Pathology”, New York, State Publishing Company, March 1902, p. 1-12.

choice of will-power over all the other components of human personality. Drama reveals the superiority of the will to art over the blind will to life. Artistic reality is distinguished from biological which merely is and does not know. But it should not be understood as an iron mask, stifling the flow of the spontaneous and variegated show of life. Pirandello's Henri IV, for instance, is the prisoner of his delusion as long as he believes himself to be the German Emperor he was masquerading as when he fell off his horse, also falling out of time that moved on without him. The moment he remembers his true identity but continues to pass himself off for Henri, he becomes his own creator in the image of another, the mask he deliberately adopts being blooded by reality. Fiction is transformed into a psychic reality, as strong as the biological, or even stronger, as it has the power to intervene into life and to multiply the self. Art anticipates reality, allows of the integration of past and present, of unity and multiplicity through the "creation of the living individual under the fixed mask".

New Texts and Con-Textual "Shadows"

The protagonist of *Sentimental Gymnastics* enters the stage as a dropout – or so is he reported by his disappointed son in a conversation with his more sentimental sister, but inefficient in her defence of their father for lack of arguments. Ion Ionescu, designated by his very name for the role of Everyman, is a shadowy high-school teacher of philosophy in an equally indistinct provincial town, slighted by colleagues and mocked by his pupils. He is moved about on the stage by his authoritative wife and mother-in-law like a mannequin, being told what to wear and what to do according to what looks like the deadening routine of daily home life. One might think, in Jamesian terms, that his "character has set like plaster, and will never soften again". All the elderly members are "bundles of habits" but the teacher's case is the saddest, because it is precisely the man called upon to shape the personality of the young that has descended to an animal domesticated by the round of daily behaviour. As N. Vaschide says in a personal development of Tarde's theory[16], the individuals are not individualities but puppets, habits compressing their lungs, forcing them to execute a mechanical sort of gymnastics.

The unexpected twists of plot are, however, the rule rather than the exception with dramatic structures. The personality the mayor has asked him to meet at the station arrives before the inert provincial family manage to set themselves going, and he turns out to be one of his former fellow students who had become a famous actor. His entry causes a "telepathic hallucination" : the characters look younger, feel keener, and speak a more coloured language, as if they had got a surplus of air and light. The principle of reality yields to that of desire or imaginative life. The

[16] N. Vaschide, *Imitația. Din punct de vedere psihosocial şi doctrina lui Tarde,* Bucureşti, Editura Lumen, 1910.

actor himself betrays the “illusion which people entertain about an unknown state”[17]. Contrary to what the audience has been watching, Moldavian complains about his city world – which greed turns into hell, where all values collapse and virtues are blighted –, lauding the reserves of ideals treasured by unspoiled provincial life. As the two former pals are left alone, the truth about Ion’s life is allowed to come out as a report on “the life and death of sentiments”. Moldavian offers the remedy: bringing the theatre into one’s own home; doing sentimental gymnastics psychic hygene, airing passions, moving and walking them about to cure moral obesity and the atrophy of the soul – the dead bourgeois soul. Let passions exercise various sports: run, raise weights, practice balance on the beam or do equal bars. Predicates constitute the subject, and doing or speaking precede feeling: *The words you say will first convince you and then those around you about the reality of the mimicked sentiments.* Imitation is the law of human behaviour, according to Tarde/Vaschide, but whereas common people imitate actions catering for bodily needs, the upper classes imitate works of art. It is imitation in art that closes the circle, for it is here that imitation is the occasion for innovation: repetition implies accidental change that can increase the heritage passed on by former generations, the cultural tradition. Unlike servile imitation, innovative minds do not confine themselves to airing models, making them known to the masses of people; they add new illusions breaking the bio-social law of psychological confirmation. Bad poets imitate, Eliot said, great poets steal, making their spoils into something better.

Moldavian teaches the Wundt as well as the Vaschide lesson: his student is going to induce passions through actions, as well as practice objectless passions. Shakespeare’s plays are the “store” of emotions: One night you play Iago: you brace up your arm, this is hate, you stretch out this normal faculty of the soul in the same way as you exercise your muscles lifting weights. Some other night you play love, you go as Romeo. Or despair... do the Lear part. Or Macbeth... his part resembles elbow gymnastics. And afterwards take a shower and wash them all away together with the passions you have been trying on.

As Ionescu evokes the props of art – stage, mask, costumes –, the actor assures him that imagination is enough, provided it is well tempered, otherwise, as William James says, a loose and uncontrolled fancy can make one paranoid. The consistent troping on the body sustains the Wundtian psychophysical parallelism:

> Ionescu: *Eu sunt plin numai de ură.*
> Moldavian: *Este ca şi când ai umbla numai pe un picior toată viaţa. Piciorul exersat se face cât un butuc… La urmă, ajungi de nu mai eşti om întreg, echilibrat… Eşti*

[17] N. Vaschide, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

> *numai o funcție a piciorului care umblă. Sentimentele debile le înlocuiesc la început cu cele artificiale, ca un picior de lemn*[18].

Following the actor's advice, the philosophy/psychology teacher (they were felt to be one and the same discipline at the time) starts practicing: the feeling of dignity by watching the portraits of Holbein and of Erasmus, of hate (he turns over the frames whose back sides reveal the portraits of his father- and mother-in-law), the warlike disposition and courage by putting on boots and cape like Napoleon's. At first they feel like Macbeth's "borrowed clothes", but, gradually, he convinces himself of the efficiency of his new "Blickfeld", speech and attire. "Could William James be right?', he asks himself'. 'No sooner had I put on the uniform that?' I started feeling like a warrior". Sentimental gymnastics strengthens his backbone, providing an object lesson documented on the American philosopher's pragmatist recipe: he manages to "conquer undesirable emotions", going through the "outward motions of those contrary dispositions we prefer to cultivate". The reward of his persistency is "the fading out of the sullenness or depression, and the advent of real cheerfulness". He changes clothes and... dispositions. He takes out his Napoleonian boots and puts on the shoes for the Romeo role, and seeks Romeo's words to address his neighbour who, like all the other women in town, is now infatuated with him. She is but an inferior, libidinal creature, though, who cannot understand the rationality of unconsumed passion: "What am I, a mannequin', she cries out, 'that you should try out on me your sentimental tailoring?" Ionescu creates Bergsonian forms "empêchées par la matière", embodied paradigms. His students run up for the best team playing chivalry, sacrifice and other noble sentiments. The professor triggers an avalanche of imitations, releases passions in the low and emulation in the upper classes. He is reborn as Novus, the expressionistic "types" grow into individualities (The Wife, the Mother-in-Law, The Father-in-Law receive names). His ideas run into print, he starts writing a play – entitled *The Gymnastics of Sentiments*, of course. Like in Vaschide's delirium of introspection, he ends up "believing in the reality of the image": he is inhabited in turn by Macbeth, Romeo, Erasmus, Holbein's ambassadors, Napoleon... and he transforms those around him into "playthings of emotion". He can no more control the overflow of emotions than can Orpheus tame down the passions of the women aroused by his songs, who tear him into pieces. It is his wife's... dramatic performance that saves Novus at the cost of everybody's mystification. Ionescu cannot distinguish now between her proofs of utmost devotion and her role-playing meant to scare off the band of the new, loosed out, maddened Menads. His friend

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[18] Ionescu: *Hate alone is what I can feel now*.
Moldavian: *That's as if you were walking with only one leg your entire life. The one that keeps practicing becomes as thick as a log and you'll cease being a balanced, complete human being. You'll be a function of the walking leg. The weak emotions need to be replaced by artificial ones from the start, like wooden legs*.

Moldavian contributes to the saving scheme by playing a police inspector, and the audience hearing a porter denying the identity of the Minister – supposedly a former colleague of the two coming to the rescue – is no longer certain about the identity of any single character on the stage, with the exception of Ionescu, the surrogate author. All the other actors are props of emotions in a pageantry of humanity. The all-time characters in search of authors. By playing the Author, Ionescu goes through the whole range of typical situations in the modern world of advertising and fabricated celebrities: being interviewed, gossiped about, sought out by dignitaries, showered with titles and invitations, posing for his statue and even having his monument erected in the churchyard. In Shakespeare, a woman's frailty is believed to stain the firmament, betrayal in love causes loss of identity, and social overthrow "makes a soap of all this solid globe". In the twentieth century virtues and vices are masks put on display on the stage and emotions lived out and spoken in the language of the body. "I prefer the mask of the living over death masks', sculptor Baliski says, 'for the masks for the dead are useless, whereas those of the living betray the play of muscles and emotions." These emotions are most often nothing more than a matter of physical exercise or games. But they are life-saving or extreme... Simulations or rehearsals of psychological and social engineering. It is the passage from the Renaissance to the modernist world picture that tells apart Voiculescu's dancers from the Shakespearian Dance.

Bucureşti, str. Apollodor, 13-15